

SARET Charitable Fund
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ANNUAL REPORT
2007

The financial support of over 386 western suburbs residents in 2007 (\$61,844.68) provided hope to neighbors who faced insurmountable economic challenges. Whether it was food, utilities, rent, or transportation, we attempted to meet [the needs](#) we could with the limited funds available to us. We were fortunate that our jewelry program aided in covering the majority of our administrative costs. That program could not have been possible without the support of the College of DuPage student activities and staff, the Light Heart Center, The Women's Realtor Council, Mykha's restaurant, Forest Glen School in Glen Ellyn. The jewelry program also covered most of the administrative needs of the organization. We continued during this fiscal year to operate as a 100% volunteer organization. With the support we received, SARET served 513 families in need, distributing a total of \$ 65,972.80 in charitable aid. Of our total operating expenses of \$71,266.76, only \$5,385.05 went to administrative costs.

Geographically SARET served primarily the DuPage County area with the largest case load of 115 families in the Wheaton, Carol Stream, Warrenville giving \$19,000, followed by 119 families in the Glen Ellyn and Glendale Heights serving that received a total of \$10,700. In East DuPage we served 80 families and distributed \$10,500, North DuPage covering Lombard, Addison, Villa Park and Elmhurst served 59 families dispensing \$7,000, in Naperville we served 25 families distributing \$5,100 and Aurora DuPage section we served 19 families with \$2800. Another \$10,000 was distributed to 96 people facing homelessness.

Housing Program:

We provided \$39,035.09 in housing assistance, paying rents and some motel stays for homeless individuals with unique circumstances. We housed many of the homeless families we served this year in motels in Glen Ellyn, Lombard, West Chicago and Clarendon Hills. This program served 131 families which is a small rise from 123 in prior fiscal year.

Car and Transportation Program:

Transportation was our second largest program that serves as a life line to finding and maintaining a job. We have tried this year to expand the transportation program by providing more gas cards, more car repairs as we battled a very low stream of car donations. We provided a total of \$10,510.53 in this program (\$5,927 in car repairs and \$4,583.53 in travel and transportation aid). This program served 163 persons (versus \$7,834.4 in last years transportation budget serving 107 people) We received this year 10 car donations but 3 of them were non-repairable. We also networked with Willow Creek's Car program that donated two cars to these two families that were in a desperate situation. Our waiting list for cars has reached 88 people and with a Daily Herald article in January, it increased to about ten more individuals and families, mostly women juggling children and a job. We helped repair over 14 cars and could not have done so without the dedicated assistance and discounted services of Jim at the Warrenville Car Clinic and a new car clinic helping us - The Lombard based Tire Connections.

The Car program requires more volunteers who can help drive clients to receive their license plates and the car, speak to car clinics, dealerships and their churches about donating cars to this important program.

Food and Nutrition Program:

While we leave most of the food distribution to the local food pantries that open their doors to their needy families once a month, we complemented that assistance with \$3,655.90 helping 92 families who could not access food due to numerous reasons. We purchase food cards, delivered food directly to

those without transportation, and provided nutritional supplements to over a dozen clients in our disability program. Many of these clients could not reach a food pantry due to lack of transportation or a medical challenge. We also provided food to families who were facing bureaucratic hurdles with Public Aid's Link Card and could not receive food stamps for many long weeks, leaving them literally without food.

Utilities Program:

The rise in the cost of gasoline has impacted so many of the families we help, that many could not meet some of their utility bills. We spent \$2,990.59 on electric, gas and water disconnections and \$1,466.83 for phone bills and phone cards. 50 people were served in this program. The phone cards were primarily used to help homeless persons trying to find work.

Health and nutrition assistance:

Because almost 75% of our assistance supports the Barbara K. Brent Disability Fund, we have provided health related help to 33 disabled clients spending \$4,579.67. This aid covered prescriptions, nutritional supplements, chiropractic, and emergency dental care when clients could not facilitate a dentist in a timely fashion. We are indebted to Dr. Larry Foster, Dr. Coco Luedi, Dr. Pauline Harding and Dr. William Johnson for availing themselves to help our clients during times of emergency.

Furniture Program:

This program is now into its third year and is only offered in unique situations involving disabled people who need to move, or single mothers without a support system. This program emerged from conducting home visits which taught us that some of our clients had no beds, kitchen tables, living room furniture and more. With the help of the residents of Stonehedge in South Wheaton as well as College of DuPage staff, we assisted about six families this year with either moving or furnishing their apartments. We must extend a special thank you to Amy Pecoraro from Lombard's Caldwell and Banker who has loaned us her truck on numerous occasions this year saving us hundreds of dollars in truck rentals.

The Jewelry Program and our store:

Our sales program diminished even further in this fiscal year (2006-07), however, in November 2007 (fiscal year 2007-008), we opened a jewelry and health and earth supporting store in Glen Ellyn that has turned our dream to Celebrate Beauty while Fighting Poverty – into a reality. Prior to that we only sold our merchandise at the College of DuPage and with this new chapter, we love having our own place which promises to be a creative haven for our clients as well as a source of income for several clients who help run the store. A report on that store will be available in our next fiscal year for July 2007-08.

Conclusion and Thanks

The SARET board was humbled by the outpouring of financial and other help we received this year every time we shared one of the more difficult situations we were attempting to resolve. Several people have pledged their monthly support making our work easier. We also wish to express our deep gratitude to the following churches and organizations for networking with us to meet many economic challenges that were mutually resolved with their help. They are: The Glen Ellyn Infant Welfare Society, Wheaton Bible Church, Glen Ellyn Park View Church, St. Vincent De Paul Societies of St. James (Glen Ellyn), St. Michael (Wheaton), St. Joseph (Downers Grove), the Downers Grove Walk-in Ministry, the Glen Ellyn Walk-in Ministry, Glen Ellyn Food Pantry, Repeat Boutique, CHAD, PADS, Peoples Resource Center, DuPage Women Realtor Council, Wheaton Rotary Noon Service Committee, Wheaton Business Exchange Group, Wheaton Outreach, Milton Township Assistance Program, [the Light Heart Center](#) and the DuPage Family Federation. Winfield based Light Heart Center's supporters extended thousands of dollars in support to our organization.

acclaimed pharmaceutical grade companies that offer high quality vitamins, anti-oxidants and other nutrients. Some of them share their profits with those who purchase from them. Others don't. Each of those companies has some unique areas of specialty and together, they complement each other very well. We hope to expand our relationships to DuPage based NOW foods and to Whole Foods and Trader Joe in order to serve more needy residents who wish to benefit from natural foods and supplements.

SARET CHARITABLE FUND

Goals for 2007

Based on our needs assessment of residents calling us for aid over the 2006 calendar year, we hope to expand the transportation program and meet a growing waiting list of 46 families, mainly single mothers, who can't afford to purchase a vehicle thus finding themselves in a deplorable level of poverty. We began asking churches to allow us to post our Car Donation Data flyer and plan to publicize the need for cars in church newsletters. Please make sure your church is supporting this effort. We provided seven donated cars in 2006, which was a decline from past years.

We began a pilot program called "Nourish DuPage" that will expand our contribution of basic but top-quality nutritional supplements to clients in our disability program. Most of our disabled clients tell us that they go for weeks without fresh vegetables and are forced to consume a high carbohydrate diet leading to weight challenges and related health conditions. We hope to expand the funding to purchase or receive donated high quality nutritional supplements such as capsuled or powdered vegetable and fruit formulations, fatty acids, vitamin C, and general multi vitamin supplements. We are also setting the ground to become members in one or more well recognized nutritional companies that will allow us to enjoy commissions on purchases made by our friends and supporters. Our web site is linked to Vita Cost which represents dozens of well known nutritional companies and provides dramatic discounts while giving SARET a monthly commission of 10% of any purchases made by our supporters. We will also be contacting NOW foods and Whole Foods for assistance with this project.

With utility prices being raised dramatically in 2007, we will be seeking grants that would allow us to increase our assistance in utility bills, primarily: electricity and gas. LIHEAP has helped our clients immensely, however, it is not enough. For example: several clients had children with asthma who required air conditioning over the summer but the LIHEAP grant they received that year could not begin to meet their electric bills. We reversed five water shut offs this year to large families with at least one ill child. Those families appealed for help everywhere and without our help these families would have been without water for weeks.

We must also expand our ability to assist with housing subsidies. The county 's human needs budgets have been cut drastically and its victims are, primarily, women and children. This situation is intolerable. With a budget of \$15,000 a month, we can meet every call made to us that was deemed worthy of aid. Our monthly budget in 2006 averaged \$5000 so we had to turn away more than half the people who called putting the most difficult cases on a waiting list and trying to meet their need one or two months later. We will be applying for several grants to meet this Important area.

We will also need to expand our program to include at least one case manager to handle the telephone interviews, home visits, advocacy, networking, and paperwork. Currently, we are not always able to meet the needs of those calling for help and we hope to improve this need.

SARET ANNUAL REPORT 2006 BY CITY

East DuPage:

General Statistics

East DuPage received more than 26% of SARET's annual assistance program in 2006. SARET provided help 35 times in the East DuPage area specifically Elmhurst, Downers Grove, Westmont, Woodridge, Hinsdale, Darien, Villa Park and Elmhurst providing \$23,526.49 in emergency assistance. Unlike the other regions we served, with aid divided between single mothers and people with health challenges, most of our East DuPage clients suffered health challenges and were thus challenged economically in varying levels of difficulty.

Background:

The seeds for founding the Disability Fund SARET which we launched in May 2005 emerged back in 2004, out of Downers Grove, when the Downers Grove Walk In Ministry referred to us a middle aged single mother with an 8 year old girl, who was injured at the hospital where she worked. She was given easy work at the hospital's Resale shop and then let go six months after her injury with no further workers compensation. She was left to fend for herself living in debilitating pain. While today SARET has come to learn who the finest disability and workers compensation attorneys are, back in 2005 we didn't. With no legal knowledge and no ability to pay her rent anymore, this mother was adopted by SARET and her rent was paid for one full year. In turn, she helped the organization with jewelry sales where all she had to do is sit, write down the sales, pack them in a bag, and clean the jewelry. She, however, could not find any employer that would hire her because of the horrendous neck injury she suffered that made it impossible for her to lift or bend. Her professional skills were in health care. She was now unable to carry out the duties she knew so well to do for the past 20 years.

With time, we found child care work for her and then she found more work on her own where the families she worked for respected her physical limitations. We terminated our help when she became self sufficient but she'd enjoy some income when helping us with jewelry shows or bead making. She recently moved back to Texas to be near her ailing mother.

Since working with this woman, the Downers Grove Walk In Ministry has called us several times a year to aid with some of the more difficult and ongoing cases.

East DuPage is blessed with a few emergency assistance agencies, however, most of them provide one time assistance only, and that is conditioned upon proof of ability to earn income the month after. These strict assistance guidelines can be tolerated when applied to healthy individuals willing to work and able to secure a job. It is, however an ethical failure, when applied to those who have become disabled by illness or injury.

The plight of these people, lead to the establishment of the Barbara K. Brent Disability Aid Fund within SARET Charitable Fund in May of 2005.

1. In September 2005 SARET began officially to target aid to people with disabilities. Our first client who received continued rent assistance was a 45 year old Westmont woman awaiting her social security disability insurance. She finally secured that aid in January 2007 and SARET discontinued assistance to this client. Our financial assistance to this woman totaled \$9300, raising questions about putting into place a loan plan or some system in which SARET see some of the money returned after settlements take place, in order to keep the fund going.

2. Hand in hand with help to the first person mentioned, we also supported a family of eight with assistance with rent, utilities and finally a used mini-van donation to ease the transportation challenges the family had and to facilitate their 18 year old son to help support his family by having his own means of transportation. The father was suffering from systemic vascular disease compounded by depression and was bringing in partial income but never able to fully feed his large family (Public Aid discontinued cash assistance after two years in 2006). With another car, the family could better fend for itself allowing the wife to learn to drive and seek part time employment. This family received a total of \$8017.84 in rent and utility assistance in 2006. With the car we donated to the family, we advised the family that with both the 18 year old son and the mother able to work, the family no longer needed our assistance.

3. In May of 2006 we moved a PADS homeless couple to a lovely one bedroom apartment in Downers Grove. The husband suffered debilitating diabetes and the wife was caring for him during their aimless survival as homeless people at PADS. She had a bachelors degree from Stanford University but had not worked in almost a decade, taking care of her mother in law over several years of illness that wiped the mother in law's substantial assets. Her ailing husband had not earned an income in several years either but was receiving small disability checks. When we learned about this couple, they were desperately homeless using the disability check for food, transportation and some of the medications. He received \$159 in link card but she did not qualify and we instructed her to apply for that. She had to carry all the suitcases from train station to bus to train station and because he suffered a serious foot fracture the year before that never healed fully, they would stay at train stations and libraries if they could get rides there. This was such a difficult case and came to our attention at a time we had no funds to spare. Meanwhile the wife injured her knee aggravating their situation. She could now not carry the suitcases. We put them in a motel and met with the wife to explain that currently they could not qualify for funds since there were none but we would send an email appeal out if they allow us to share some of the circumstances they are facing. We explained to them that whatever we can raise would go to pay the rent. We had a landlord in mind. She assured us that when her husband is settled safely in an apartment she will do all she can to work and cover the rent. We sent an email appeal that brought about \$2000 in contributions and covered 2 months rent and some of their 3 week motel stay until the apartment was available. The husband's nurses at Good Samaritan Hospital organized a lovely large garage sale which raised about \$500. We settled the family in a one bedroom apartment, furnished it fully with donated furniture, paid two months rent and advised the couple that at this point in time, our funds for the disability fund were so limited that we conditioned our help on the wife seeking full time work and not relying on us for further assistance. WE recently spoke to the landlord and he told us they have been struggling but are pretty much paid up. Total assistance to this couple was \$2536.00

4. During 2006, we assisted on and off a single 45 year old Elmhurst civil engineer suffering from stenosis of the spine compounded with bouts of depression. He managed to work odd telemarketing jobs at about \$8 an hour but when hours were diminished and he could not meet some of the bills we helped out with gas cards and small rent subsidies that tied him over. His luck did turn around when finally received his disability about 6 months ago and also got subsidized housing through the health department. The list closed down right after he received the housing. There are no more vouchers available at this time. We provided him with a total of \$745 in aid. \$650 cam in 3 rent grants and the rest in gas cards to assist him with his job searches.

5. On Sunday Memorial Day weekend of May 2006, shortly after moving the couple we mentioned to Downers Grove, we received a call from a homeless young mother and her boyfriend. They desperately needed a place to stay because PADS had closed down for the summer and they had no means to get to the handful of PADS sites available. They were concerned for the young mother's 2 year old retarded toddler. They had no food and were covered by mosquito bites from sleeping in the Hidden Lake area by Route 53 in Glen Ellyn near Wal-Mart. The child was severely developmentally retarded, could not walk or crawl and the mother, age 22, assured us that she was working with Easter Seals but without a car, they were in a very difficult situation.

We advised the couple that we were almost without funds but we would put them at the Mayflower hotel for one week because it was situated a few blocks away from Labor Ready where the young man could get some work each day. He indeed informed us that he did get some work but not every day. We purchased formula and baby food for the baby and also some food

for the couple and then arranged to take the mother to two food pantries due to our lack of funds (St. Joseph and Our Ladies of Carmel). We did not hear from the couple after that week came to an end.

6. Another Downers Grove family that called us three times in 2006 was a disabled mother of three children. Two of the children suffered from asthma, the oldest, age 16, had just undergone a massive back realignment operation that kept him from school for several months and the mother has Multiple Sclerosis. The mother worked at a dog kennel part time and received disability for her medical condition. We first helped them with car repair so she could get to work. We helped them a second time by paying a water bill preventing a shut off that same day. She assured me that she called every agency in the area and no one could or would help her. We called the village and gave them our debit card number. We also helped the children during Christmas with \$300 in donated gift cards from our members. In September the mother was facing a gigantic electric bill and her electricity was cut off for three weeks already. We began a frantic phone communication with Com Ed and with LIHEAP to see what could be done to reverse the disconnection since the family had so many health problems. We succeeded in reversing the shut off and the mother was put on a payment plan. The family received in total \$702.16 in assistance from SARET.

7. In July 2006, The Downers Grove Walk In Ministry referred to us a homeless and mentally ill 60 year old woman who was living at the Downers Grove train station for 3 weeks. St Joseph church paid for 2 nights at the Red Roof Inn in Lombard. The Downers Grove Walk In Ministry asked if we could help her also since they could not access any more help for this woman. We decided to place the woman in a Glen Ellyn motel for a week and then assess what can be done next. We had considered putting her at the Mayflower Motel but were concerned that the food stores were too far. The Glen Ellyn arrangement would have been more appropriate for her since she was having some problems with her leg and was severely malnourished and gaunt. WE spent \$726.66 on her motel stays in Glen Ellyn and food, while also recruiting four other agencies to help. Since she ended up residing in the Glen Ellyn motel, we included her in our Glen Ellyn report. We included her in this report because it evolved out of Downers Grove. The outcome of that case was not good. The woman refused medical treatment, any governmental assistance due to paranoid thinking, and when she would not cooperate with us, we terminated the assistance.

8. Another Downers Grove former resident, now homeless at PADS with her husband, was also facing the challenge of PADS being only partially open. She was staying at the Mayflower and walking quite a distance to the newly opened Downers Grove Jewel where she had part time work. The other Downers Grove couple we settled had referred her to us. She was not seeking our assistance but a loan for \$270 because she finally had an opportunity to move into the Tivoli Motel which was cheaper than the Mayflower. The Tivoli is always full so one has to have cash in hand to take advantage of those rare occasions when an opening takes place. Both she and her husband (a veteran with two cataracts and a back injury) had just secured work but their pay checks were not going to come until the end of the week. We were glad to help and also provided her with several rides to and from her work at Jewel to the Mayflower with 3 Downers Grove/SARET volunteers. She repaid the loan in a timely fashion and once she moved into the Tivoli, she didn't mind walking to Jewel.

9. In august, The Walk In Ministry called us about an old client of their's , a 60 year old Westmont man, who was referred to us exactly two days before he had to evict his one bedroom apartment. He had battled colon cancer for ten years and despite a Masters Degree from Pudue and a PhD from Cornell Universities, and despite his brilliant landscaping work, he used up all

his savings because he was self employed and run out of health insurance. He also was also an avid reader. He was now surviving off SSI at \$640 a month plus \$159 in food stamps. The disability check barely covered his rent leaving nothing extra for anything else. It was clear that he could only afford to survive on his monthly check if he could find a room to rent. One of our clients was looking for a room mate and he rent from her for one month. The two did not get along and our wishes to find him a better arrangement were granted exactly one month later when a Wheaton home owner had a room for rent sign outside his house. He was a Hispanic man, who rented four rooms at \$450 all expenses covered. Our client took one look at the bare landscaping around that house and sprang into action, planting flowers, pruning and beautifying the house.

He has spent the winter planting hundreds of seeds that will be soon planted outdoors. The house much like the "Bird man of Alcatraz" is filled with plants where ever space can be found, both in his own room and around the house. The landlord is an easy going man and is putting up with this man's passion for plants.

10. A homeless 35 year old man with severe psoriasis was residing at the Mayflower when a PADS person he knew loaned money from him and promised to return it two days later. That person never returned to the motel and left this man without funds for his own motel stay. We learned about this man when we were helping the young couple with the young child. We offered him help with finishing his week at the motel and in return for that he began helping us every time we needed someone to move furniture for some of our families. He became a very dedicated volunteer. Still at PADS and staying with friends, we found him a job doing pick ups for a Lombard mail sorting company that we are in contact with. He now had reliable income and joined a former PADS friend sharing the rent with him. Two months later old Chevrolet was donated to us and decided to ease his transportation battles by donating the car to him. Prior to owning his own car, there were days when his bike broke down that he walked two hours back from work because the buses were not operating after dark. This case is especially encouraging because by finding him a job and a car, this man slowly got his life back, got a cell phone, could afford to buy food, gasoline, and even repair the car a couple of times. We recently advised him of a room to rent at the house in Wheaton where our other client resides, and has moved into a larger lower floor room with more privacy than the others room in the house. His rent is \$600 and he supplements his full time job with pizza deliveries once or twice a week. This man has helped us move furniture four times since we first got to help him.

All the clients mentioned above no longer need ongoing assistance except for the mother with Multiple Sclerosis who may require occasional help with utility bills. We are ready to move on and work with new families and there are four already awaiting in line.

Our Plan for future clients in East DuPage:

1. The Downers Grove Walk In Ministry has asked us to help two new families needing ongoing financial assistance. One a couple with the husband awaiting a kidney transplant and receiving dialysis 4 times a week. The wife has been diabetic since high school. Even though between the two they earn \$2350, Their medical costs are close to \$1000 a month putting them behind on the rent payments. No help given yet.
2. A Downers Grove resident is a single mother of a 5 years old who needs help with rent and nutrition. She has expressed a deep desire to access herbs and healthy foods. She also needs a car because hers no longer works. No help given yet.

3. A 35 year old Downers Grove single mother who suffers serious digestive inflammatory symptoms and had most of her pancreas removed last year, needs help with partial rent. She is facing a horrendous situation at her work, an exploitative corporate outfit that promises to train its employees for insurance work and makes them sign contracts followed by incredible workplace abuses that we plan to report further up to the correct agencies and legal experts. She can't resign, and despite a promise of income exceeding \$12 an hour, her income varies between \$7 to \$12 depending on the week and the whims of this miserably run slave labor outfit. She called in December crying because she had to make a choice between paying for transportation or eating a reasonable diet. In December she had so few hours of work and was sent home almost every day having spent her past earnings on taxi cabs, trains and buses. She was emotionally and physically drenched by this employment nightmare. Will she ever get her insurance licensure through this company is hard to say, but meanwhile she is putting up with the daily harassment, her emotional health on the rocks.

We have began some case management and provided a rent subsidy three times and hope to work with her more closely on her predicaments, health challenges, needs for a better diet and some nutritional supplementation that we can refer her to.

We have instructed her to keep a journal of the abuses she is suffering and we are researching labor law attorneys to explore whether the abuses she and other are suffering at this employment are subject to legal action.

We plan to help her get a donated car so she can more easily find other work, and help her survive her current ordeal until she can get the licenses promised through this company.

4. Another Downers Grove thirty year old woman who suffers from bouts of severe depression but attempts to work, however, she keeps battling challenges she has difficulty handling. We have helped her only with cell phone bills to help her stay connected to job searches and her ex-husband and the daughter who resides with him since she has difficulty functioning in the stress she is under. We have recommended she switch disability attorneys and use the attorney that helps our clients. We would like to help her resume a normal life with some rent assistance and a support system. We believe from our contact with her over the past year that she could shift if she knows she has people helping. She feels very abandoned and alone.